

Central Union Telephone Company Building
(Ohio Bell Telephone Company Building)
311 North Wayne Street
Piqua
Miami County
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2274

HABS
OH-2274
311 N. WAYNE ST.
PIQUA, OHIO

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS
OHIO
55-Piqua
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CENTRAL UNION TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
(Ohio Bell Telephone Company Building)

HABS No. OH-2274

Location: 311 North Wayne Street
Piqua
Miami County
Ohio

Present Owner: City of Piqua, Ohio

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of

Significance:

The structure was begun on April 16, 1918 and finished in late June of 1919. The new structure combined and consolidated the offices and telephone switching boards of the Central Union Telephone Company and the Piqua Home Telephone Company. The two story structure was constructed with the latest in fire protection technology including fireproof glass, fire curtains, alarms and concrete/brick exterior walls.

History of the Central Union Telephone Building

From 1899 until 1917 Piqua possessed two separate telephone companies. The older company, The Central Union Telephone Company, was part of a national network and had begun serving the city in 1880. The second firm was established in 1899 by seven local businessmen under the name of The Piqua Home Telephone Company.

The Home Telephone Company went into receivership in 1917 and was completely absorbed by the Central Union Telephone Company. With an increased subscribership, the Chicago based Central Union Company began construction on a new central exchange building. Ground breaking for the new structure was held on April 16, 1918. The site was an empty lot on the east side of North Wayne street, the former location of the Spiker Wagon Company, and later the Piqua Fire Department.

The structure was built at an estimated cost of thirty-five thousand dollars. The Piqua Daily Call on April 16, 1918 described the building as follows: The basement would contain storage rooms, an ash room, and a boiler room; on the first floor would be the vestibule hall, general offices, Manager's offices, apparatus room, battery room, entrance hall and a janitor's room; the second would house the operating rooms (with switchboards), restrooms, locker room and the kitchen.

The building was finished in June of 1919 as described above and on June 28, the changeover was made from the old switch boards to the new. At the time of the switch, Piqua had approximately 1,650 telephone subscribers. The new Western Electric switch boards were constructed to handle over 4,500 subscribers.

Ohio Bell Telephone was organized in 1920 and on December 31, of that year, the Piqua plant of the Central Union Telephone Company was turned over to the new firm. Between 1920 and 1958 the structure was remodeled three times. In 1934 Ohio Bell rearranged the switching equipment on the second floor and increased their telephone cable capacity. During 1941, a two story brick/concrete addition was erected on the northeast corner of the building for additional office and equipment space. Finally in 1949, minor alterations were made to the first floor offices.

In 1952, the company's business and public service offices were moved to 122 West High Street. Six years later, after the construction of a new plant at 630 West High Street, Ohio Bell moved all of the telephone switch board operations out of the North Wayne Street building. From 1958 until 1964, the company used the structure for storage and maintenance operations.

In July of 1964, Ohio Bell sold the building and for the next twenty-one years the structure served as an office building for attorneys, accountants, physicians and insurance agents. Under the ownership of attorneys James

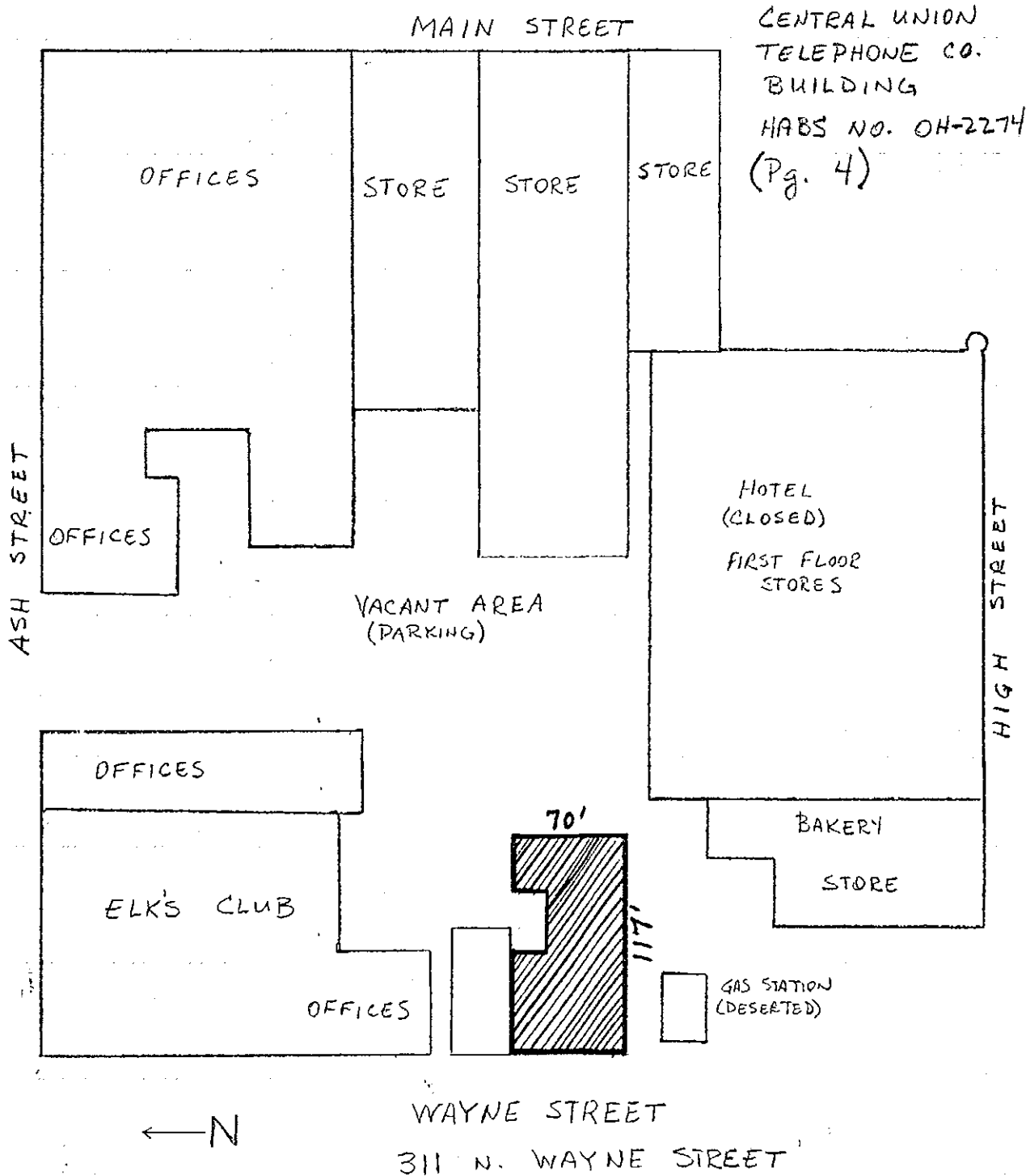
CENTRAL UNION TELEPHONE BUILDING
(Ohio Bell Telephone Company Building)
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DeWeese and Richard K. Wilson the interior of the building was remodeled into numerous smaller office areas. During this period during the late 1960's and early 1970's the interior ceilings were dropped, aluminum fillers was placed in the first floor front windows, and the southeast side and rear section windows were bricked up. The structure was purchased by the City of Piqua in 1985 and was vacant in 1987.

311 North Wayne street is located one block west of the city's traditional business district. The structure is a two story pressed brick structure with an elongated two floor plan. This unusual arrangement was constructed to facilitate telephone wiring and large telephone switch boards. The first floor facade contains a concrete and brick watertable broken by two basement-type windows. There are also two elongated windows topped by radiating brick lintels with brick keystones. The recessed front entrance is flanked by pilasters that give the appearance of supporting the plain concrete architrave, frieze and cornice of the door's entablature. The second floor facade contains three, three over one double hung sash windows topped by a projecting cornice decorated with dentils and four scroll-shaped brackets. The structure is topped by a simplistic mission style roof parapet.

The material for this narrative was obtained from the Archives and Special Collections of the Flish Public Library, Piqua, Ohio and the Miami County Recorder's Office, Miami County Safety Building, Troy, Ohio. The Archives and Special Collections in Piqua contained microfilm copies of the Piqua Daily Call (April 16, 1918 and June 28, 1919), Piqua City Directories (1914-1986) and Piqua City Telephone Directories (1909-1986). The Miami County Recorder's Office in Troy provided deed transactions from 1914 until 1985.

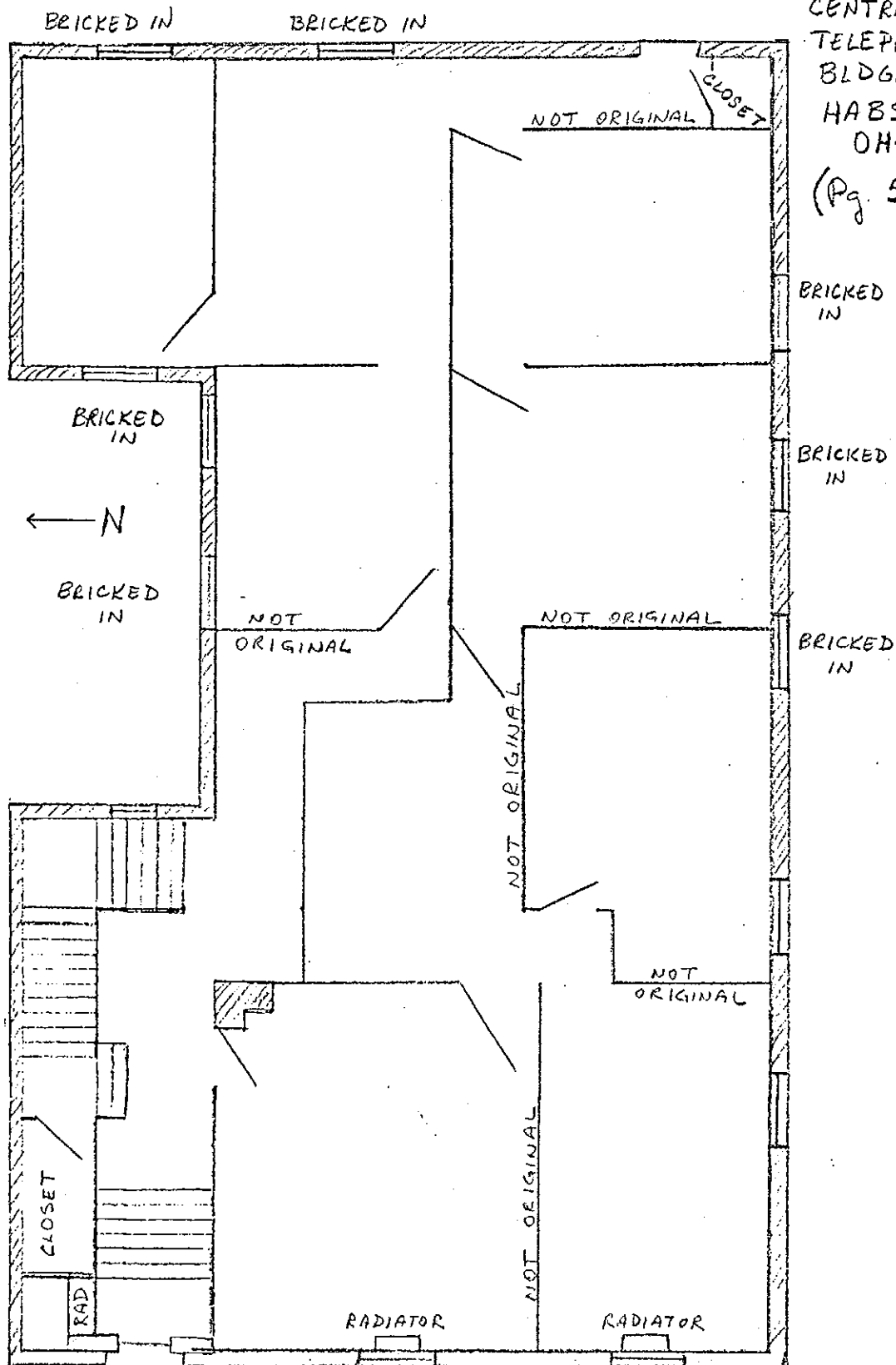
Additional searches for historic photographs or drawings were made at the Piqua Historical Society (Piqua, Ohio), Miami County Historical Society (Troy, Ohio), Ohio Historical Society (Columbus, Ohio) and the offices of Ohio Bell, Ameritech Co. (Dayton, Ohio). None were found.



CENTRAL UNION
TELEPHONE CO.
BLDG.

HABS NO.
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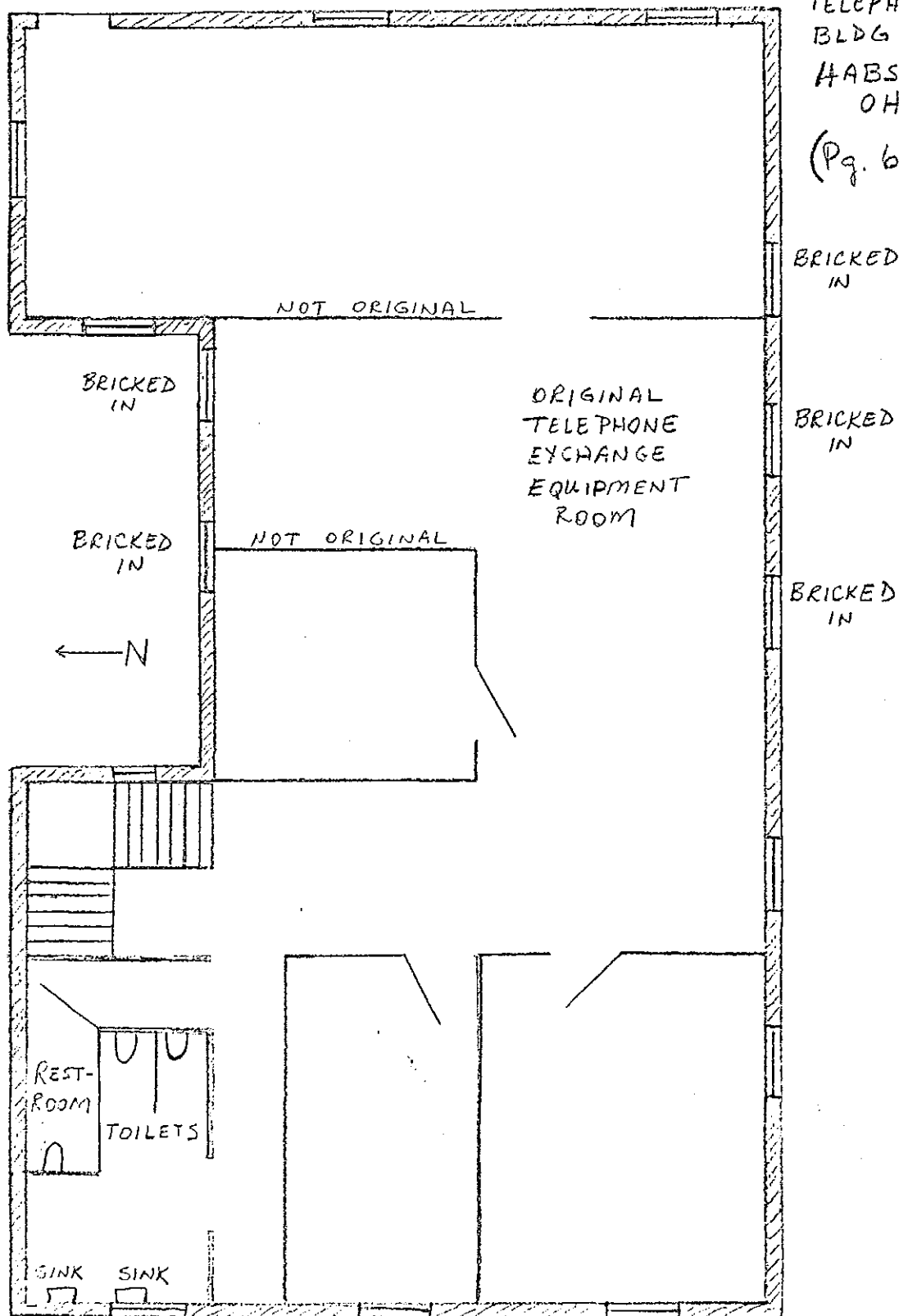
311 N. WAYNE STREET

FIRST FLOOR

CENTRAL UNION
TELEPHONE CO.
BLDG

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311 N. WAYNE STREET SECOND FLOOR